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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses customer services in academic libraries. The first section addresses the concept of the "customer." Thereafter, the paper applies the metaphor of the producer and its consumers to the relationship between a university and its students. The second section looks at education as a process of refinement. Next, the establishment of Malmo University (Sweden) in 1998 is described as an effort to create a different kind of institution with a broad base for recruiting students, a new pedagogical approach, collaboration with the community, and a multi-disciplinary approach. The fourth section describes the students at Malmo University and the pedagogical challenge for the University's library to meet the needs of many types of students, including the process of information literacy, as well as problem-based learning or active learning as a method of education. Following this, the paper discusses a special project at Malmo University that examined whether or not there was a need for a special pedagogical approach to library courses in information searching. The sixth section discusses the program for information literacy and the committee for quality control at the University. The final section considers the question "For whom do we exist?" in relation to the library at Malmo University. The conclusion discusses challenges presented for librarians and students. (MES)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Customer or refined student?

Reflections on the "Customer " Metaphor in the Academic Environment and the new Pedagogical Challenge to the Libraries and Librarians

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This paper consists of parts from two essays:
Keyword: Information Literacy. The Educational Challenge that Lifelong Learning poses for University Libraries
and
Customer or refined student? A Report - or rather Reflections - concerning Social-psychological Analysis of the "Customer " Metaphor

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"Do not let your studies impede your education" (Unknown professor to his students)

The Concept of the Customer

The Swedish word *kund* (customer) is related to the German word *Kunde* and means, originally, known (*känd*). This meaning of the word is precisely what one deals with within the so called relationship-based marketing. To get to know as much as possible about the customer, to know him or her so well that one can establish a relationship that will satisfy the needs of both parties. The customer becomes satisfied and loyal, the company´s employees feel a sense of satisfaction and such an arrangement provides a steady source of revenue for the company. The wheels of a well functioning market economy are in motion. A market where, according to some, consumption is the same as an improved quality of life. In a market economy the production and exchange of goods are based upon voluntary agreements between independent actors: producers and consumers. The term market usually refers to a group of potential customers who have specific wishes regarding the product and who have the resources to buy it.

Can one apply this view - of producers and consumers being two equal parties – when looking at the relationship between a university and its students? Is the independent, modern university, controlled by the state-owned Higher Education Administration, a producer of services that attracts students - the customers - in a market place among other institutions of education? A market where supply and demand, advertisements and relationships, are just as relevant as in the commercial market.

To a certain degree one can apply the "customer" metaphor to the student. The university offers, not only short courses, but a very complex product: namely the three-four year degree course. But, as they say, the student is not purchasing knowledge he is buying a future. With time and borrowed money the customer - who is becoming increasingly harder to please - buys what the university has to offer. What happens to "education and knowledge" under such circumstances? If one expands this metaphor to the concept of satisfied customer the question arises whether it is desirable to only have satisfied students. Wasn't the ideal, recently, to have critical thinking and questioning students?

Refinement - for what purpose?

The Swedish researcher Bertil Rolf writes in the book *Kvalitet och kunskapsprocess i högre utbildning*, Knowledge and Quality in Higher Education (1993) about education being a process of refinement. If you add a marketing perspective to higher education and give people what they request, then you satisfy the course participant on a level that they all have in common, and sometimes even below that level. But education can, according to him, also have as a goal to refine people. "Its purpose is to raise the demands that people have put on themselves and to point them in the right direction to reach those higher goals. In an existentialist perspective, education can partially lead to a refinement of people - or more precisely, get them to refine themselves."

What Rolf means is that higher education should sometimes trouble the students and not only make life easy for them. Kafka expresses something similar but in another way:" If the book we are reading does not wake us up as though we had been hit in the head with a bat why bother to read at all? Books that makes us happy are books, we in theory, can write ourselves. What we need are books that affects us deeply." It is not long ago since the point of higher education was to mould the students into independent and critical people instead of satisfied people who get exactly what they want and not an inchmore. According to Rolf, independence, insight about oneself, reflection and an ability to choose are the ideals one should aspire to within the field of education. He sees no meaning in applying, as he puts it, illusions about the customers experiences and needs at the university. One should instead strive to raise the quality and strengthen the students ability to judge and choose this quality. But only those who have seriously taken

part in a professional process of seeking after and providing such knowledge can establish the criteria needed to judge its quality. He compares the satisfied-customer perspective with a feverish child in need of penicillin but who rather wants ice-cream. For us who work with knowledge production to get modern "instrumental" students to choose and understand that they really need the higher quality of penicillin more than they need tasty ice-cream is indeed a challenge. A way to break the tendencies to an irresponsible consumer attitude to knowledge is by applying the new pedagogical approach of making the students participate, be responsible for their own learning. A sharp contrast to this is the idea that the student is a consumer, a passive consumer without any personal responsibilities in an expanding "mass-university".

McUniversity or a Different University

George Ritzer, Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland has, in his books *The McDonaldization of Society* (1996) and *The McDonaldization Thesis* (1998), described and deliberately exaggerated the concept of fast-food universities. Something which will become a reality if we only apply market trends to higher education. We are in the postmodern consumer society, on our way to creating a university that will be a pastiche, a blend of fast-food restaurants, Disneyland, MTV, and Las Vegas. He describes a higher education where cost efficiency and quantification has taken over at the cost of course-quality and meaningful contact between students and professors. The pressures of being efficient results in a computer-designed and graded multiple choice exams. Hoards of students will be processed through the new mass-universities with an emphasis on degree rather than on what they have actually learned. Goal-orientated students choose universities according to ranking while the employer looks superficially at all the credits - the number credits accumulated equals the level of qualification. The professors are forced to publish more but without having the time to fully explore their ideas. Quantity, is completely analogous to the chain of fast-food restaurants and their inflated, giant hamburgers. The student, in turn, grades their teachers performance by using standardized questionnaires that provide limited space for presenting any qualified reasoning that lies behind their grading. The teachers who find it easy to perform, who are entertaining and not too demanding receive a high grade compared to the more serious professor with profound ideas and who's demands on student participation and responsibility are high.

Even the design and organization of higher education will resemble large shopping malls or fast-food restaurants. Easy accessibility, open around the clock, and service minded staff will be the norm. Students and their parents are to a great extent customers and education is the product they need. "All they want of higher education is simple procedures, good service, quality courses and low costs." (*Levine, A. Student Expectations of College, 1993 in Rizer p 153*)

Ritzer establishes a standpoint by deliberately exaggerating his description of the "mass-university" He wants us to make a choice. And if that choice, is to go in the direction of "mass-universities," then we must also be aware of how far we wish to go in that direction.

Malmö University was established on the 1st of July 1998. It is a typical representative of the new incentive to establish colleges across the country in Sweden. The entire process has gone very fast and in the beginning we who works there were very proud of this and as a kind of reward to ourselves we established new courses and admitted many more students. Behind this effort to create a different kind of institution lies many valuable ideas and goals. For example the broad base for recruiting students, a new pedagogical approach, collaborating
with other aspects of the surrounding community, being multi-disciplinary .....the efforts to grow as a university should not result in an abandonment of these goals.

Who are the students and what do they want?

It is claimed today, and is shown in many surveys, most recently at Växjö University, that students, in a whole new way, are aware of costs and of what it means to be efficient. Soon we will see them march out of the classes demanding money back if the courses do not provide what they initially promised, says, among others, Ritzer. To the same extent as we got them to march in. Universities and colleges are increasingly trying to outshine each other in their attempts to attract these "future-consumers" by way of catalogs, adverts, and fairs - all done in the spirit of a "day out at an American shopping mall". These students are more globally aware than ever before. Higher education is already an international commodity. In the U.S. foreign students contributed with 13 billion dollars during the academic year 98-99.

In Australia the export of education is essential for the country's trade-balance. And by the year 2005 Great Britain hopes to have 25% of the "education market". (Source: Dagens Nyheter, The Swedish daily newspaper´s educational supplement)

Currently, in Sweden, there is a great deal of attention being paid to a recent study at Lund University regarding the biased recruiting in higher education. This study shows that the chances of going to college is six times higher if your parents have gone to a university. But that reason is not always a strong enough incentive for going to college. Today, when the number of jobs available increase and many young people see how easy it is to get access to "IT-millions" education is no longer attractive. "I don't have time to waste 3-4 years getting an education! By the time I'm finished the opportunities will have disappeared" says 19 year old Simon, already wealthy from building homepages that he and his classmates sell expensively during their last year of high school.

The question - who is a student at Malmö University? - is easily answered. Of the approximately 13.000 students many are citizens of Malmö, including many immigrants, who wish to get a higher education and still be in a "home environment". In many cases it is people who have chosen to study half-time and work at the same time. At an individual level the differences between the students are greater and their career direction might not be so obvious. Three of our students will exemplify this. Remy is 30 years old and originally from the Ivory Coast but was brought up in Paris, he is studying systems-technology to become a graduate engineer specializing in telecommunication Why did he choose Malmö University? Simply because he wasn't admitted to the more prestigiuous Lund University but aims to continue his education there. He is now finished with his degree work that he has done for the Swedish company Ericsson. His subject area is very specialized but since he has gone to a French technical high school and to Faculté de Science at Paris III-University he has already acquired an educational background quite different from that of Swedish students.
We discuss French literature and despite him having chosen a technical direction in his studies he says he misses learning more about human communication and languages.

Åsa is 23 and Alma is 19. Both represent a completely different type of student. They are studying "People, Environment and Society" within the Nature and Resource Programme and do not yet know in what way they will use the knowledge. Both have studied the social science program at high school and have a muddled view of the kind of job they can expect to get, maybe environmental engineer or environmental consultant. This is their choice: the broad based program. They do not want to become too specialized, too soon. Even if at times it might feel a bit scary, it is also rather comforting, says Åsa. We are agreed that their attitude is clearly linked to their interest in society and to their subject choice.

The pedagogical challenge for us as a university library is to meet the needs of as many types of students as possible.

What is the role of the library and librarians? Are they prepared for the educational challenge? Is it possible for them to play a leading part when it comes to initiating teamwork and introducing quality programmes in information literacy at the universities? What aspects are new and what constants, i.e. unchanged conditions, can one find? An essential characteristic of librarians is their ability and desire to change the role they play when it comes to the challenges of lifelong learning.

Problem:
To become information literate, which is the overall goal for the participants in our library course programme, one must view information literacy as a process, and not something with a clearly-defined beginning and end. A process can seldom be measured. Can one describe a process? Is the encounter describable? Does this process do more than just aid one's natural skills or is it "only" a financial necessity resulting from the massification of higher education? If so, what happens to quality? To meet the needs of all those involved in lifelong learning, Sweden has decided to merge public and university libraries. There has been an increase in the number of students taking part in distance-education programmes, and as a result of that public libraries are facing new challenges. How will they supply sources of information for those students?

Problem-based learning or, to use a more comprehensive term, active learning as a method of education is a prerequisite for libraries wishing to accommodate the needs of students who are independent nformation searches. "The changes, during the 1990s, in methods of education, and the development of a more student involved form of learning, have led to increased demands for broader and more varied sources of information, including appropriate library functions, at all levels of education. One can observe that students are doing independent information searches in connection with their class assignments, that the range of study aids has become more varied, and that the use of libraries for the purpose of teaching is increasing," Louise Limberg has pointed out in her dissertation (Limberg 1998, p.17). The old system of handing out lists of required reading for each course is being replaced by a method of education where the students take responsibility for their own learning. What type of help does such a student need?

A special project at Malmö University

Since we have a broad base for recruiting students we deliberately try to attract students from non-academic backgrounds. The library carried out a project that examined if there was a need for a special pedagogical approach to our courses in information searching. We have a responsibility to ensure that these groups are not excluded from the IT-community.

This project, carried out, during the academic year 1998-99 consisted of two parts. One theoretical part with lectures in methodology and special "mature student" pedagogics for staff and tutors as well as a practical course in information searching together with students from IMER, International Migration and Ethnic Relations, where many foreign students study and CKU, Center for Competence Development where many mature students with considerable work experience study and with Bio-medical analysts, who are often middle aged, women and immigrants. The course aspect was led by several tutors and proceeded slowly and all the tests where oral. How did we market this course? It was not easy since the students do not see themselves as belonging to a group "unfamiliar" with searching for information. We decided to target both teachers and students and called the course "Intensive course in information searching. Special offer to the students at Malmö University" hopefully appealing to their will to become more competent, than others, in this field.

One of the great successes with this project could be defined as relationship marketing. The continued contact with the students resulted in a different kind of quality. A library, and especially a university library, can seem rather daunting if you come from a non-academic

background. But these students felt comfortable with us, the library and computers. They kept coming back as old friends. We observed them searching independently and only asking a few qualified questions at the information desk. We had the feeling that a whole new world had opened up before them. This sounds almost biblical but it was a very satisfying experience. We probably achieved both a refinement as well as a staff-customer satisfaction. This use to be called the win-win concept.

Programme for Information Literacy and the Committee for Quality Control

"The fundamental university education shall, beyond knowledge and skills, provide the students with an ability to pass judgment independently and critically, be able to independently solve problems as well as be able to follow the development of knowledge within the field of education concerned. The education shall also develop the students ability to exchange information on a scientific level." (SFS *The Swedish Code of Statutes* 1992:1434)

If you look at the relationship, between the university library and the students, as a salesperson-customer relationship, then the most important contribution that the library can provide is our courses, both in printed and digital form, in information searching. An information competent person can be described as a person with an ability to search and critically examine and creatively use the information. The purpose with our courses as mentioned above is to make the student aware of and take responsibility for their own learning, gain increased ability to think critically and independently, improved ability to solve problems and give them the tools needed for life-long learning.

The committee for quality control at the university consists of area prefects, pro-rector, head of administration, union representatives, and student union representatives. The Library and IT has, before this committee, presented the programme for information literacy. A programme aimed at the information literate student and conducted on different levels, from a pre-degree level to a doctoral level. This programme is now part of an overlapping plan of action regarding quality work at the university. The Higher Education Administration, who recently gave Malmö University the right to award Bachelor Degrees, mentions especially the ambitious IT support and the courses in searching, evaluating and handling information integrated into the subject areas, as an important quality factor when awarding us with this right.

Whom do we exist for?

The only simple and indisputable question every organization must ask is: For whom do we exist? The concept of customer can be questioned, however one cannot question that the organization has come about for the purpose of providing a service to a customer or client, user or visitor. A university exists, to some extent, as something politicians can speak about in terms of regional importance, national importance or as a place where teachers can develop their methods, researches test their theories. However, the only important group to attract are the students.

The library at Malmö University exists for students like Remy, an immigrant from the Ivory Coast and France, and for students like Åsa and Alma. Our purpose is to offer them services they need for their studies, create a good relationship through out the entire duration of their studies, and contribute to their information literacy as well as a will to keep searching. We can only achieve this if what we offer is of a high quality. And if we shall talk about refinement then we must first look at what information literacy really means. Competence is an overused word - from social competence to computer competence - that really doesn't say very much. Information literacy is a term that deliberately connects, not only to competence, but also to a deeper understanding of what one is reading. The Australian researcher Christine Bruce has written in her book "*The Seven Faces of Information Literacy*" (1997) about the seven phases a student must pass through to go from Information Technology to conquering Knowledge

Construction and Knowledge Extension and, finally, reaching Wisdom. If what she writes is accurate: that students can use the information literacy we offer as an asset and turn it into wisdom that can improve the world -THEN - we can really talk about refinement. An example of such a course is now taking place at Malmö University called Communication for Development within the area of Arts and Communication. The course started last autumn and has as a purpose to deepen the insight into the interaction between social development and information, communication and media, through both theoretical studies and through a specific project assignment in a developing country. The library has an important role in this distance course and I have in fact used the IFLA-list to help the students to get in contact with librarians and researchers in several developing countries during the last academic year.

Concluding discussion

Is everything new, then, or are there some constants in this context? Such a constant could be *the desire to search, the human need to seek knowledge, will, desire to learn*, as one of the interviewed librarians put it.

For libraries and librarians, information technology is a pipe dream, but in a very special way. To gather and structure information in printed form has always been their specialty. This is now done in a new way, while at the same time as everything has become searchable much faster and in a much simpler way. At the same time, it has become more difficult to quickly and easily evaluate the information one finds. This is a need shared by everyone in the new information society. We must, in some way, learn this together, and no one has all the answers. But the librarians have acquired a new role and are in demand as never before, both as information architects, disseminators and presumptive educators in the field.

In the *Resolution om bibliotekens roll i det moderna samhälle*, Resolution on the Role of the Libraries in the Modern Society (1998), the European Parliament describes the role of the librarian as follows: "Professional librarians have outstanding qualifications when it come to administrating and handling information. This makes it possible for all citizens to access and be able to use the information, something that is becoming increasingly important in the information society information technology increases in importance" (my underlining).

Can librarians meet this challenge? I believe that recent library-school graduates can meet this chailenge even if I it is largely a question of personality. Despite that, we can, in our employment interviews, see a clear difference between young and old librarians, between those who studied years ago and those who today are admitted through tests and interviews. Right from the start there is an obvious authority and professionalism, which only grows larger. They do not even understand some of our questions, for example the one that asks if they have chosen the library profession instead of a teaching career because they expect it to be smooth sailing. Instead of what? To be a librarian today is to be a teacher. Librarians are aware of this, and also that companies are screaming for information architects. What some fear today is that not very many people want to become children's librarians and that soon the public libraries will have a problem, when a whole generation of librarians goes into retirement..

And the student, how is he or she challenged? How does the situation look for him or her in these various cultures that exist at the different seats of learning? Is the student as "new" as we keep saying? Is it any different than it was in the past or are there any great differences between studying at old or newer institutions of higher learning? One of the librarians at the time-honored university library in Lund, a library that now has the task of preserving a cultural heritage rather than being a spearhead, says to me that students are as they have always been: they do what is expected of them, follow the rules and regulations, and have the same need for kindness, respect and support. Still, a big difference, especially at this library, is its openness and its goal of creating a "library for the students", and not just for researchers, as was previously the case. So is there a new kind of student with new needs? One of the really new conditions today is that the Swedish seats of learning are increasingly adopting the so-called active

learning method. This means that the students take an active part in their information gathering, and for this they need the libraries and librarians more than ever. That is why the interaction between the tutor/ librarian and the searching student is important all the way up to the doctoral level. Active learning and information technology bring students and librarians together in a way that was previously reserved for pupils and teachers, and not only in connection with course work but also in a practical way in every search situation in the library.

The librarian is there for the student either he or she is a customer or being refined to reach information wisdom. The student is not there for the librarian. The student is at the university in order to shape his or her future by himself, and to do this he or she has to utilize every available resources, human as well as material. And this is really nothing new either, even if the roles and prerequisites have partly changed.

In the future we will see an increasing emphasis put on information literacy at public libraries, in the field of adult education, and in connection with company training courses. Team-building and cooperation, both on and off campus, are some of the most important questions one sees when one looks ahead, as well as the need to introduce assessments before, during, following and long after the complicated process of information literacy.

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